

VZCZCXRO9642
RR RUEHPA RUEHTRO
DE RUEHNK #0745 3531324
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 181324Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7948
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0399
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0321
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0375
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 1917
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0708
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0441
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0816

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 000745

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/18/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [FR](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH AMBASSADOR ON CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The French Ambassador sees no movement towards a resolution with General Aziz proceeding with a transparently manipulated "democratic transition" and President Abdallahi offering no political alternative. With no prospects for an early resolution, the French are re-engaging on a revised military cooperation program limited to counterterrorism efforts. End Summary

¶2. (C) Charge met December 18 with French Ambassador Vandepoorter prior to his departure for the holidays. Vandepoorter saw little likelihood of any political change in the offing. He derided the upcoming National Dialogue on Democracy as being transparently stacked by General Aziz with hand-picked tribal and religious leaders filling the seats but precious little real political diversity being presented. What might have offered at least the potential argument of a true dialogue for an exit from the political impasse was being so openly manipulated that he could imagine no way the international community could bless the process. Vandepoorter anticipated a process that will attempt to bless the coup and lead to elections "with only one candidate" that will, in the end, leave Aziz with no more legitimacy than he has now. The ambassador saw Aziz as tactically playing this badly since, in all probability, there would be no public ground swell for President Abdallahi were the process truly open. Vandepoorter said the Embassy had not yet received instructions on whether to participate in the National Dialogue or not.

¶3. (C) Vandepoorter saw President Abdallahi as also tactically missing opportunities. He told Charge that in his last discussion with President Abdallahi he had stressed the three things needed for any possible return: (1) International pressure which he had, (2) Internal pressure which he told the President "much to your credit" had been built and maintained despite tremendous obstacles, and (3) A political plan which he told the President needed to be more than his laudable and righteous position of principle. Vandepoorter saw the President putting far too much faith in the coercive power of sanctions noting, "We have been imposing visa sanctions for a few months now, including several instances of denying visas to Aziz' family, and we presume you are doing the same -- that doesn't seem to overly concern the military." Vandepoorter recognized that more sanctions were on the way and saw that the FNDD was doing an excellent job shoring up support among African Union PSC

members in advance of next Monday's meeting -- which he assumed would result in some concrete AU actions. That said, he did not see those efforts in themselves, or any possible Security Council efforts, as being able to dislodge Aziz. The ambassador was strongly critical of any FNDD thoughts that negotiations were not needed since continued pressure would ultimately result in a pro-Abdallahi counter coup. "If anything, there are even harder line elements in the military who want a normal coup plain and simple without all this bother of having to set up civilian front men -- if there is a counter coup, it will likely be against whatever level of democratization Aziz is willing to accept."

¶4. (C) Vandepoorter told Charge Paris had completed a policy review on Mauritania and, with no political solution in sight, had started limited military cooperation "in the interests of the 2000 French citizens who live and work in Mauritania." French military re-engagement (DATT report SEPTTEL will provide details) follows a revamping of the previous program and is designed to "only target those needs directly related to counterterrorism" with the main effort being focused on helping the High Command complete a reorganization of units for a stronger counterterrorism role and renewed training/advisory assistance for the Paratroop Battalion in Atar as well as the rudimentary new "GLATR II" unit being pulled together there. Vandepoorter noted France would also continue to include Mauritania in region-wide counterterrorism meetings and exchanges. France will not, however, work on broader mil-to-mil programs for the time being.

HANKINS